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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

McKinley approved to lead Guard Bureau

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National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – Air Force Lt. Gen. Craig R. McKinley was confirmed Thursday, Oct. 2, as the 26th chief of the National Guard Bureau by the U.S. Senate.

He will also become the first four-star general in the nearly 372-year history of the National Guard.

The current director of the Air National Guard, McKinley was nominated by the president in September based on the recommendation of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

He succeeds Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum, who was also confirmed today by the Senate to become the first National Guard deputy commander for the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM). Blum has served as chief of the Guard Bureau since 2003.

As chief of the National Guard Bureau, McKinley will be the senior uniformed officer representing nearly 468,000 Citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen.

He will also serve as the principal advisor to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on National Guard issues.

“I give all the credit for [this promotion] to the performance, friendships and relationships of [Blum],” said McKinley Sept. 22 at the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) conference in Baltimore. “Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum has been a fantastic chief of the National Guard Bureau.”

Gates recommended McKinley for the upgraded four-star position in July following the recommendations of the Commission on the Guard and Reserves and the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The NDAA also established the Guard Bureau as a joint activity of the Department of Defense.

“General McKinley has earned this place in history,” Gates said during the NGAUS conference. “I trust he will continue to lead the Guard to new heights.”

A Florida National Guard member, McKinley has served as director of the 107,000-member Air National Guard since May 2006. Prior to that, he served as assistant deputy chief of staff for plans and programs at Air Force Headquarters. He is a command pilot with more than 34 years of military service.

McKinley was promoted to brigadier general in 1998, major general in 2001 and lieutenant general in 2006.

The last Air Force general to serve as Guard Bureau chief was Lt. Gen. Russell C. Davis, who held the position from 1998-2002.

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